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ABSTRACT

The career field experience program at a midwestern high school places broadcasting students on location for observation of the profession and optional job training or work. In addition to radio and television stations, field locations include advertising agencies with production studios, corporate production facilities, recording studios, cable companies, and audiovisual production houses. The program requires five forms: the location agreement or contract, parental permission, a project proposal, student weekly reports, and an evaluation completed by the site contact person. The broadcasting class is two hours, with time scheduled for travel to and from the field site. During the program's five years of existence, six problem areas have been identified: transportation costs, legal problems, union restrictions, personnel mobility, unsatisfactory field sites, and unsatisfactory students. Despite these occasional difficulties, the program has maintained an excellent relationship with the field sites, and the students have found the experience to be extremely rewarding. (HTH)

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CAREER FIELD EXPERIENCE
A look at on-site usage by high school communication class

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Career Field Experience

INTRODUCTION

The intern concept is common on the college level as a tool for educating students. In communication, field internships are done by speech teachers, therapists, broadcasting majors, and most recently interpersonal communication majors.

Many probably do not know that the intern concept is also very popular on the high school level. Industrial, distributive, business, food, and social services education have programs that release high school students for on-site training, observation, and work.

A unique program at Milwaukee John Marshall High School has students from their broadcasting specialty placed for on-site education. Each City of Milwaukee High School has a special career emphasis within the school. Marshall has about 200 students of their 1,600 population taking a broadcasting curriculum as a career offering. The classes' main objective is to prepare the students for jobs in the audio and visual fields. The students learn to make audio and visual productions in the studios built in Marshall High School. During their senior year, the students are placed in specialized internships. The explanation, process, accomplishments, and problems of these internships are the areas of discussion of this article.

EXPLANATION

First off one must throw out the word "internship". That term carries with it two concepts that were unacceptable to the sites and the school. The first concept being "that the students

would get pay". If no pay is involved, the program is released from many hassles with unions and insurance companies. The second concept not used being " the site is responsible for training." Instead emphasis was placed on the student having the opportunity to observe on the site with actual training or work opportunity being optional with each site.

The term "Career Field Experience" was created to replace "interships". The term's initials formed an acronym that is pronounced (see-fee). Each senior in the speciality has at least one CFE. Arrangements with sites vary, but the goal is to have a student on-site for at least three weeks for two hours a day.

PROCESS

The first requirement is to get sites willing to take students. This has not been a big problem. A good article was written in Broadcasting, July 12, 1982 by Lynn Schafer Gross on "Internships Bridge the Gap Between Academic and Professional". That article gives some persuasive reasons to sway reluctant site contact persons. Marshall does not limit placement to radio and television stations. Other sites include advertising agencies with production studios, corporate production facilities, recording studios, cable companies, and audio visual production houses. Milwaukee is a relatively large city,so we have almost forty sites that have taken students. Every effort is made to match the student to a site of his or her choice.

Forms are the next most important step in the process. Marshall uses five forms. One is the Cooperating Location Agreement which spells out the time and expectations of the CFE. This form is used in the initial site contact. The second form is a Parental Permission form which excuses the child from regular school attendance and spells out the site and transportation liability. If the student is over 18, she or he may fill out this form rather than a parent. The third is the Project Proposal form which works out the specific activities of the student at the site. This form is filled out by the site contact person with the student. The fourth is a Weekly Report filled out by the student and returned to the teacher. The fifth is the Evaluation that is filled out by the site contact person about the student at the completion of the CFE. If anyone is interested in copies of the forms, send a request to Marshall Broadcasting Speciality, 4141 North 64th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53216.

Scheduling is the third step in the process. The senior broadcasting class is a two hour block. An effort is made to schedule the student with a study hall before or after the class. This allows transportation time for the student without missing any classes except broadcasting. The teacher can make brief site visitations during the time the class would have met.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The CFE program is in its fifth year at Marshall. Aside from a few instances which will be discussed under problems, a fine relationship has been maintained with all the sites. The

students have often found the experience extremely rewarding. A few examples might suffice to illustrate this. One student was put in charge of getting spectator actualities used by the radio station to hype concerts, festivals, and games. Another student welcomed all guests for the noon local TV talk show and gave them tours before preparing them for the show. A third student did video editing for a medical facility with an in-house studio. Some students have even gained employment after their CFE. The teachers have found CFE a good reinforcement and check of the concepts taught in the classroom. Overall the program is a success.

PROBLEMS

Six problem areas have been identified so far: transportation costs, legal problems, union restrictions, personnel mobility, the unsatisfactory site, and the unsatisfactory student.

If a student has a bus pass, transportation is no problem. If not, cost is going to be a factor. Sites also have to be located on bus routes. Students are not legally able to drive to sites since they would not be covered under their insurance for a school required trip. Marshall has tried to tap some school funds for bus tickets for the three weeks. Obviously some students are also willing to pay their own way.

Many sites are concerned about their legal responsibility. The site contact form and the parental permission form put the liability on the school. There has been no incident to test these forms in court.

Unions protect people's jobs, and Marshall does not intend a site to use one of our students to do a job that should be done by an employee. This often means that a student will be prevented from any hands-on work. This has to be made very clear to the student before hand to avoid the student's disappointment with the site. Many sites exist without unions and run on volunteers. These sites are better choices for the easily bored student.

People in the field of broadcasting are generally very upwordly mobile and, therefore, constantly changing locations. This makes for very poor continuity in establishing sites and causes the teacher often to start over with establishing the use of the site. A good piece of advice is to maintain more than one contact person at a site.

The site itself may be a problem. Often this can be prevented by carefully filling out the forms, the cooperating location agreement and the project proposal. Even then one can still run into a site who uses the student for inappropriate tasks. In one site, the student spent many hours tearing up old carpeting. Tact and discussion can usually solve these types of problems.

The most obvious problem that could occur is the student. A youth with low skill level or poor attention span can cause some real damage to the reputation of the program. The teacher must be able to analyze the student, match the student with the

most compatible site, and stress the importance of making a good impression upon the student. Sites who often deal with college and university interns must be cautioned about the age difference and told to adapt their expectations of the students accordingly.

CONCLUSION

Although the problem section seems the longest, the program is a success, and knowing the drawbacks is a key to keeping it so. Marshall uses the program for those in broadcasting communication, but it can certainly be used for other areas of communication as is done on the college level. As an asset to both the student and the teacher, it is worth a try.